

**News from Rep. Stephanie Herseth
For Immediate Release
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**HERSETH URGES ADMINISTRATION TO ADEQUATELY FUND
VETERANS HEALTH CARE**

**More than 1200 South Dakota Veterans Turned Away in 2005 Due to
Lack of Funds**

January 24, 2006, Washington, D.C. - More than 1,200 qualified South Dakota veterans were denied access to hospitals, clinics and medications in 2005 due to inadequate funding for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care, according to recent data released by the VA. As the administration prepares its outline for the FY 2007 budget, Rep. Stephanie Herseth, a member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, is urging President Bush to request adequate funding to provide veterans with the health care and medications they need. The administration will submit its budget request to Congress on February 6.

"Veterans' health care should be among our first priorities, not our last. It's a shame that these American heroes, who chose to serve their country, are not getting the necessary health care and medications that they need and that they were promised," said Herseth. "We owe it to our nation's veterans to fully fund their health care needs."

Nationwide, more than 260,000 veterans applied to receive health care through the VA in fiscal year 2005, but were turned away because of a cost-cutting decision to limit veterans' access. Since January 17, 2003, the administration has denied access to VA care to new Priority 8 veterans -

those who do not receive monetary compensation from the VA for service-connected disabilities and whose incomes are above a national and geographic income threshold. In 2005, the national income means threshold for a single veteran was \$25,842.

Data shows that the VA turned away 1,201 South Dakota veterans who applied for VA health care in FY 2005 due to this enrollment ban.

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